

## Message Text

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11677 01 OF 03 221156Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
AID-05 COME-00 EB-08 FRB-03 TRSE-00 XMB-02  
OPIC-03 LAB-04 SIL-01 OMB-01 /093 W  
-----030768 221204Z /41

R 221137Z JUL 78  
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8441  
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN  
AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS  
AMEMBASSY COPENHAGEN  
AMEMBASSY DUBLIN  
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE  
AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
AMEMBASSY PARIS  
AMEMBASSY ROME  
USMISSION USNATO  
AMCONSUL BELFAST  
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 01 OF 03 LONDON 11677

USEEC  
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E. O. 11652: N/A  
TAGS: EFIN, ELAB, UK  
SUBJECT: PAY POLICY AND COLLECTIVE BARGAINING: REACTIONS  
FROM THE CONFERENCES

SUMMARY: THE RESULTS OF THE UNION CONFERENCES HAVE  
REAFFIRMED THAT THERE IS NO PROSPECT OF AN AGREED, OVERT  
PAY POLICY DEAL BETWEEN THE TUC AND THE GOVERNMENT.  
BUT THERE IS STILL ROOM FOR AN IMPLICIT ACCOMMODATION  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 11677 01 OF 03 221156Z

BETWEEN THEM. DURING THE SPRING AND SUMMER CONFERENCE  
SEASON ONLY SEVEN OF THE TUC'S 113 AFFILIATES INDICATED  
ANY DEGREE OF EXPLICIT SYMPATHY FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF  
INCOMES POLICY AND ONLY THREE OF THESE FOR A PAY "NORM".  
THE SEVEN ACCOUNT FOR ONLY 2.3 MILLION OUT OF A TOTAL  
OF ALMOST 12 MILLION CONGRESS VOTES. SO. WITH NO  
PROSPECT OF CONGRESS SUPPORT FOR A PAY NORM. THE

LABOR GOVERNMENT'S ALLIES , AS LAST YEAR' MAY BE EXPECTED TO TRY AVOID A CONGRESS DECISION ON ANY PARTICULAR LEVEL OF SETTLEMENT. RATHER, THEY ARE LIKELY TO TRY TO FRAME IMPORTANT PAY POLICY VOTES IN TERMS OF VOLUNTARY WAGE "MODERATION" TO GIVE SOME SEMBLANCE OF BEING IN TUNE WITH THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE RETAINING AN INDEPENDENT TRADE UNION POSTURE. TUC LEADERS HOPE SUCH A RESULT WOULD MAKE IT EASIER FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO FIGHT AN ELECTION, MINIMIZE RANK AND FILE DISSENT AGAINST THE TUC LEADERSHIP, AND LEAVE THE TUC WITH MAXIMUM FLEXIBILITY TO COPE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S PAY POLICY WHATEVER ITS EVOLUTION. END SUMMARY.

1. BRITISH TRADE UNIONS TRADITIONALLY MEET FOR THEIR ANNUAL (OR BIENNIAL) DELEGATE CONFERENCES FROM APRIL TO EARLY JULY; AND CALLAGHAN TOLD PARLIAMENT LAST MONTH THAT HE WAS WAITING FOR THE RESULTS BEFORE HE MADE UP HIS MIND ON PAY POLICY. BUT TO TUC LEADERS, IF NOT TO ALL GOVERNMENT MINISTERS, THE GENERAL TREND OF TRADE UNION ATTITUDES TOWARDS PAY POLICY HAS BEEN CLEAR FOR SOME TIME; AND ANY LINGERING HOPES IN THE LABOR GOVERNMENT FOR WINNING TUC APPROVAL FOR SOME EXPLICIT AGREEMENT ON A MAXIMUM LEVEL OF SETTLEMENTS FOR THE COMING YEAR WERE DISPELLED BY THE UNION CONFERENCE DECISIONS. ONLY SEVEN OF 113 AFFILIATED TUC UNIONS PASSED RESOLUTIONS WHICH IN ANY SUBSTANTIVE SENSE WERE SUPPORTIVE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 11677 01 OF 03 221156Z

OF AN EXTENSION OF PAY POLICY. THESE SEVEN UNIONS, TRADITIONALLY MODERATE AND (WITH ONE EXCEPTION) PRIMARILY ORGANIZING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR, TOGETHER ONLY ACCOUNT FOR 2.3 MILLION VOTES AT CONGRESS. OF THESE UNIONS, ONLY THREE HAVE EXPRESSED AN EXPLICIT ACCEPTANCE OF THE EXTENSION OF A PAY NORM. THESE THREE UNIONS BOAST A TOTAL OF 381,000 TUC VOTES. THE REMAINDER OF THESE SEVEN WARMEST GOVERNMENT ALLIES HAVE MERELY EXPRESSED AN INTEREST AND COMMITMENT TO CONTINUED DISCUSSIONS WITH GOVERNMENT OVER ECONOMIC ISSUES, INCLUDING PAY.

2. DESPITE THIS OVERWHELMING REJECTION OF A FORMAL AGREEMENT, IT IS IMPORTANT TO EXAMINE THE STRATEGIC LOCATION OF THE UNIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN MORE FERVENT IN THEIR SUPPORT. THEY INCLUDE THE MAJOR RAILWAY UNION (NUR), THE LARGEST PUBLIC SECTOR (LOCAL AUTHORITY) UNION (NALGO), THE UNION OF POST OFFICE WORKERS (UPW), AND THE MAJOR UNION IN THE NATIONALIZED STEEL INDUSTRY (ISTC). ALSO INCLUDED IS THE COUNTRY'S THIRD LARGEST UNION WITH MEMBERS SPREAD OVER A RANGE OF THE PUBLIC SECTOR (GMWU) WHOSE GENERAL SECRETARY DAVID BASNETT

AS GENERAL COUNCIL CHAIRMAN WILL PRESIDE AT THE  
SEPTEMBER CONGRESS. BASNETT, AN ARDENT SUPPORTER OF  
PAY POLICY, COULD ONLY EXTRACT AN AMBIGUOUS MANDATE  
FROM HIS CONFERENCE.

3. THIS CONCENTRATION OF ALLIES IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11677 02 OF 03 221158Z  
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10  
L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15 ICA-11  
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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8442  
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AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG  
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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 02 OF 03 LONDON 11677

REFLECTS THE GROWING AWARENESS, EXPRESSED BY NALGO  
GENERAL SECRETARY GEOFFREY DRAIN, THAT "FREE COLLECTIVE  
BARGAINING IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR IS UNATTAINABLE".  
NONETHELESS, THE GOVERNMENT WILL BE HAPPY THAT IT CAN  
PROBABLY RELY ON THESE PUBLIC SECTOR UNIONS TO TAKE  
WAGE "MODERATION" SERIOUSLY, BOTH IN A CONGRESS VOTE  
AND THE ENSUING ROUND OF PAY BARGAINING. THIS COMMIT-

MENT TO MODERATION IS NOW THEREFORE THE EFFECTIVE LIMIT  
OF GOVERNMENT HOPES FOR TUC SUPPORT.

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PAGE 02 LONDON 11677 02 OF 03 221158Z

4. THE POSSIBILITY IS THAT THE GOVERNMENT WILL OBTAIN  
SUCH SUPPORT FROM CONGRESS, QUALIFIED BY OBJECTIONS TO  
VARIOUS PARTICULARS IN THE WHITE PAPER ON PAY AND  
REQUESTS FOR ASSURANCES TO PROTECT TRADE UNION INTERESTS.  
MAJOR TRADE UNION LEADERS, INCLUDING SELF-DECLARED  
OPPONENTS OF ANOTHER YEAR OF PAY POLICY, PRIVATELY  
AND PUBLICLY SAY THAT WAGE MODERATION IS ESSENTIAL TO  
COUNTER INFLATION. BUT HOW MODERATE IS MODERATE?  
IT APPEARS LIKELY THAT, IN PRACTICE, ATTEMPTS WILL BE  
MADE BY THE TUC LEADERSHIP TO STEER EVENTS ALONG THE  
SAME PATH FOLLOWED THIS PAST PAY ROUND DURING WHICH THE  
TUC PLAYED A NEGATIVE, YET EFFECTIVE, ROLE: BY NOT  
SUPPORTING OR ISOLATING CHALLENGES TO THE GOVERNMENT'S  
WAGE GUIDELINES (THOUGH THIS 10 PERCENT GUIDELINE WAS  
NEVER ACCEPTED BY CONGRESS).

5. THOUGH A LABOR GOVERNMENT COULD EXPECT A SIGNIFICANT  
DEGREE OF TUC SUPPORT ONCE AGAIN (AND ALL SIGNS ARE  
THAT THE PRINCIPAL TUC LEADERS WILL BE AS ACCOMMODATING  
AS POSSIBLE), IT REMAINS HARD TO BE CONFIDENT THAT  
TRADE UNION DISCIPLINE WILL BE SUFFICIENT TO CHECK  
BREACHES OF PAY POLICY. THE PICTURE BECOMES MORE  
OBSCURED IF ONE ACCEPTS THE SUGGESTIONS THAT OCTOBER  
WILL SEE A GENERAL ELECTION. WHATEVER THE OUTCOME OF  
THAT VOTE, IT IS POSSIBLE TO SEE THAT SOME NEGOTIATING  
GROUPS WILL NO LONGER BE CONCERNED ABOUT THE IMMEDIATE  
POLITICAL COSTS OF WAGE SETTLEMENTS. IT IS THEREFORE  
NOT POSSIBLE TO PREDICT WITH CONFIDENCE THE OUTCOME  
OF NEGOTIATIONS IN THE COMING WAGE ROUND. MAJOR TRADE  
UNION LEADERS NOW STRESS TO US THAT THE INDIVIDUAL  
UNIONS, NOT THE TUC, DO THE NEGOTIATING, AND THAT TUC  
INFLUENCE OVER THE NEGOTIATING MOOD CONTINUES TO EBB  
WITH THE PROLONGATION OF PAY POLICY. GENERAL SECRE-

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PAGE 03 LONDON 11677 02 OF 03 221158Z

TARIES OF SOME "BIG BATTALIONS" WHOSE UNIONS ARE ON  
RECORD AGAINST CONTINUED PAY POLICY, SAY THAT THEY WILL  
NOW HAVE TO DEVISE THEIR OWN TACTICS TO KEEP THEIR  
NEGOTIATORS "MODERATE" IN ORDER TO SUPPORT A LABOR  
GOVERNMENT. THEY SAY THEY BELIEVE THAT THE RANK AND  
FILE BASICALLY HAS BEEN IN LARGE MEASURE CONDITIONED

TO THE DANGERS OF A WAGE EXPLOSION. NEVERTHELESS, THEY HAVE PRIVATELY TOLD CALLAGHAN THAT IT WILL BE UP TO THE GOVERNMENT TO "PLAY TOUGH" AGAINST INFLATIONARY WAGE CLAIMS, WHICH UNION LEADERS MIGHT NOT BE ABLE TO CONTAIN.

6. THE BARGAINING TARGETS THAT HAVE BEEN SET BY UNION CONFERENCES DURING RECENT MONTHS ARE HARDLY INDICATIVE OF THE LEVEL OF MINIMUM ACCEPTABLE SETTLEMENTS; BUT THEY ARE WORTH A CLOSE LOOK TO GAUGE THE STRENGTH OF DELEGATE FEELING ON PARTICULAR ISSUES AND THEIR RELATED PRIORITIES. THERE HAS BEEN MUCH TALK WITHIN THE TRADE UNION MOVEMENT CONCERNING BARGAINING FOR REDUCTIONS IN THE WORK WEEK. EMPLOYER AND GOVERNMENT REACTION HAS BEEN COOL, PRIMARILY DUE TO CONCERN OVER THE POTENTIAL IMPACT ON UNIT COSTS. HOWEVER NEITHER IS THE COMMITMENT OF PROMINENT TRADE UNION LEADERS TO WORK WEEK REDUCTIONS CLEARLY SHARED BY THE MASS OF UNION MEMBERS. OF THE 60 PLUS CONFERENCES FOR WHICH DETAILS ARE AVAILABLE, IT APPEARS THAT SOME 20 UNIONS HAVE EXPLICITLY FOCUSSED ON HOURS REDUCTIONS AS A PRIORITY. OF THESE UNIONS THE MAJORITY ARE PUBLIC SECTOR ORGANIZATIONS OF THE RELATIVELY LOW PAID. THIS INDICATES THAT, ALTHOUGH A REDUCTION IN HOURS IS A SERIOUS ASPIRATION OF BRITISH TRADE UNION LEADERS, THE ATTITUDE OF THE SHOP FLOOR IS LESS COMMITTED. NATIONAL TRADE UNION LEADERS WHO TELL US THEY ARE PUSHING TOWARDS A 35-HOUR WEEK AS A WORK-SHARING MEASURE TO REDUCE THE WORRISOME HIGH LEVEL OF UNEMPLOYMENT, PRIVATELY SAY THEY ARE GETTING PRECIOUS LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 04 LONDON 11677 02 OF 03 221158Z

LITTLE SUPPORT FROM THEIR MEMBERS WHO ARE FEARFUL THAT NEGOTIATIONS FOR A SHORTER WORK WEEK MAY RESULT IN DEALS CUTTING AVAILABLE OVERTIME PAY. AND SUCH NEGOTIATIONS ARE COMMONLY LEFT TO THE LOCAL OR SHOP FLOOR LEVEL.

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PAGE 01 LONDON 11677 03 OF 03 221207Z  
ACTION EUR-12

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LIMITED OFFICIAL USE SECTION 03 OF 03 LONDON 11677

7. APART FROM THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS A SHORTER WORK WEEK,  
SOME UNIONS HAVE SET BARGAINING TARGETS RELATED TO WAGES.  
THE IMPORTANCE OF "TARGETS" OR "DEMANDS" PASSED AT  
NATIONAL CONFERENCES SHOULD NOT BE OVERESTIMATED.  
THEY ARE INITIAL BARGAINING POSTURES AND DO NOT REFLECT  
THE MINIMUM FOR WHICH NEGOTIATORS WILL EVENTUALLY  
SETTLE. HOWEVER, IN THE LIGHT OF THE UNCERTAIN POLITI-  
CAL FUTURE, IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THESE INITIAL DEMANDS  
WILL BE OF SOME IMPORTANCE, SINCE THE PROBABLE INCREASE  
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PAGE 02 LONDON 11677 03 OF 03 221207Z

IN EARNINGS OVER THE COMING YEAR WILL UNDOUBTEDLY BE  
ONE OF THE CENTRAL ELECTION ISSUES. MR. CALLAGHAN HAS  
ALREADY STRESSED THAT FUTURE PRICE STABILITY IS DEPEND-  
ENT ON THE LEVEL OF WAGE SETTLEMENTS AND HAS INDICATED  
THAT HIS GOVERNMENT CAN BE MORE CONFIDENT OF CONTROLLING  
THESE SETTLEMENTS THAN THE TORIES. TUC LEADERS WANT  
NO PART OF AN APPEARANCE OF A CONFRONTATION WITH THE  
GOVERNMENT. BUT IF EVENTS UNFOLD AS NOW APPEARS  
LIKELY, THE ELECTION COULD BE HELD BEFORE THERE IS ANY  
SUBSTANTIAL EVIDENCE OF A WAGE PATTERN (I.E. BEFORE

ANY MAJOR NEGOTIATIONS ARE CONCLUDED), BUT AFTER THE TUC HAS OFFICIALLY MADE KNOWN ITS EXCEPTIONS TO VARIOUS ASPECTS OF THE GOVERNMENT'S PAY POLICY PROPOSALS. IN THESE CIRCUMSTANCES WHATEVER THE PRIVATE SUPPORT OF TRADE UNION LEADERS FOR PAY POLICY, GOVERNMENT AND TUC LEADERS ARE CONCERNED THAT THE CONSERVATIVES WILL CLAIM THAT INCOMES POLICY HAS LITTLE OR NO TRADE UNION SUPPORT BEYOND SOME TUC LEADERS, AND THAT CONSERVATIVE AND TRADE UNION FEELINGS ARE AT ONE IN FAVOR OF FREE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING. THE CONSERVATIVES COULD POINT TO THE WAGE RESOLUTIONS OF UNION CONFERENCES TO DEMONSTRATE THE POINT. TUC LEADERS AND MINISTERS SAY THEIR PRINCIPAL FALLBACK IS THEIR BELIEF THE SHOP FLOOR STILL DOES NOT TRUST MRS. THATCHER.

8. THAT MOST OF THE UNION CONFERENCES AVOIDED THE STIPULATION OF PARTICULAR WAGE TARGETS IS HELPFUL TO THE LABOR GOVERNMENT. BUT THERE ARE SOME IMPORTANT EXCEPTIONS TO THIS GENERALIZATION. MOST IMPORTANT IS THE DECISION OF THE MINERS TO PRESS FOR POUNDS 110 PER WEEK (RISES OF APPROXIMATELY 40 PERCENT). ELSEWHERE, THE ENGINEERING UNIONS HAVE A STATED AIM OF A NATIONAL MINIMUM RATE FOR SKILLED MEN OF POUNDS 80. LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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PAGE 03 LONDON 11677 03 OF 03 221207Z

THERE ARE OTHER EXPLICIT TARGETS. WHILE EXPERIENCE SUGGESTS THESE TARGETS (E.G. OF THE MINERS AND ENGINEERS) HAVE HAD LITTLE IMPORTANCE FOR THE EVENTUAL SETTLEMENTS, "TARGETS" PROVIDE RALLYING POINTS FOR CHALLENGERS TO PAY POLICY. THAT THERE ARE NOT MORE "TARGETS" IS A MEASURE OF THE EXTENT TO WHICH TRADE UNION LEADERS HAVE SUCCEEDED IN PERSUADING THEIR MEMBERS OF THE POLITICAL IMPORTANCE OF THEIR CONFERENCE VOTES.

9. THUS THE SHAPE OF THE COMING BARGAINING YEAR IS DEPENDENT ON UNKNOWNNS, INCLUDING THE IMPACT OF AN EARLY GENERAL ELECTION. IT IS THE WINNING OF THIS ELECTION WHICH IS THE PRIMARY TARGET OF TUC LEADERS AND THE GOVERNMENT. EVERY APPEARANCE NOW SEEMS TO BE THAT LABOR'S POLICY ON WAGES IS AIMED AT VICTORY IN THE COUNTRY: WHEN THAT HAS BEEN ACHIEVED, THE GOVERNMENT (WHICHEVER GOVERNMENT) WILL PROCEED TO ADDRESS THE REAL ISSUES IMPLIED BY COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AND ITS CONSTRAINTS IN BRITAIN.

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